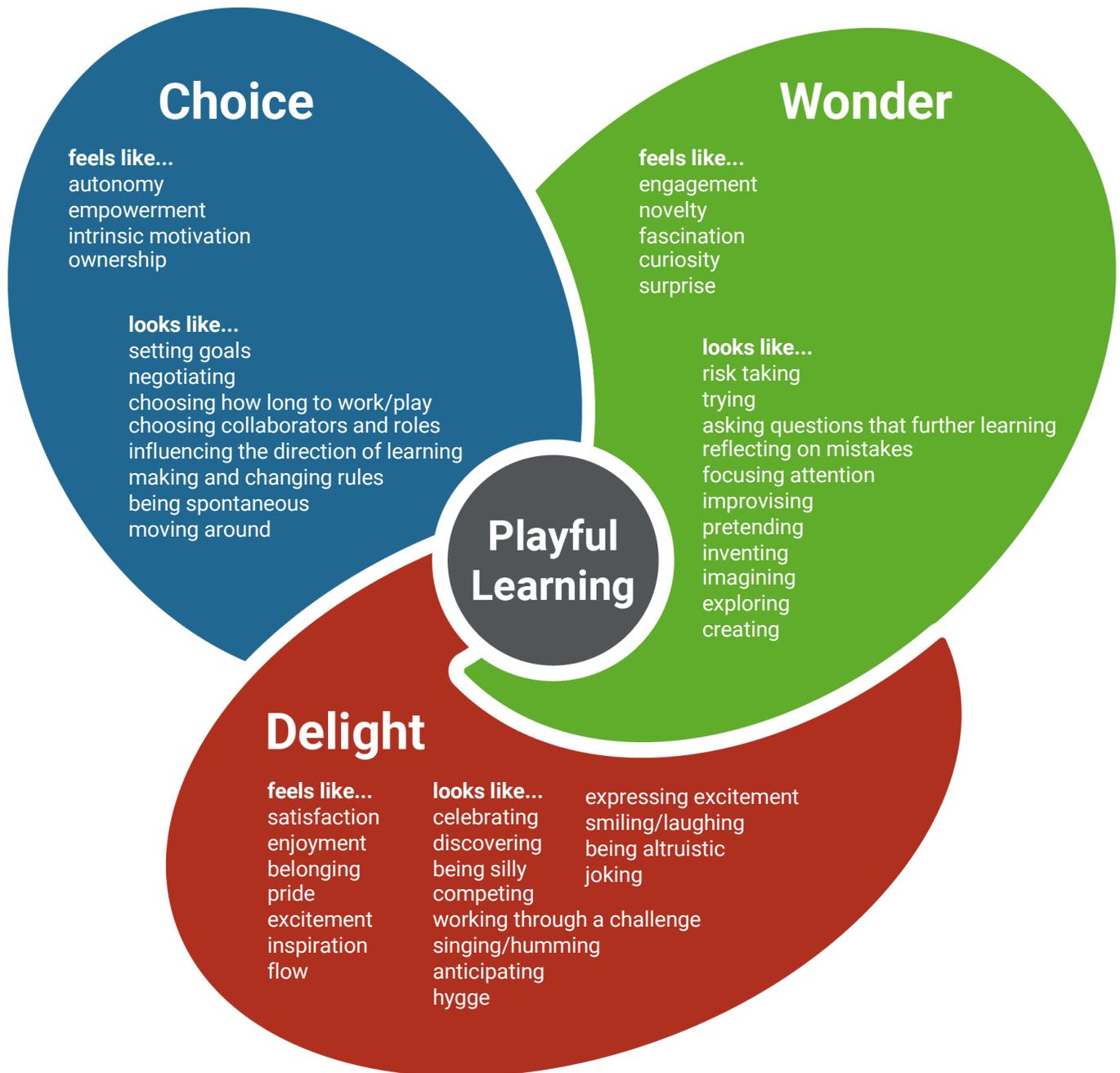


# Indicators of Playful Learning: International School of Billund



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In each of these images, learners are involved in playful learning. What does that mean at the International School of Billund (ISB) in Denmark?

Having a collective understanding of playful learning can help us look for, talk about, and design experiences around play in school. The **ISB Indicators of Playful Learning** were created through a playful participatory research process between educators at ISB and researchers on Pedagogy of Play. Drawing on literature, classroom and school observations, and interviews with the ISB community, the Indicators describe what playful learning looks (and feels) like at ISB. Because playful learning includes both subjective and objective dimensions, the indicators represent psychological states (what playful learning *feels like*) as well as observable behaviors (what playful learning *looks like*).

The ISB Indicators are characterized by three overlapping categories—choice, wonder, and delight. Playful learning in school is most likely occurring when an experience touches on all three categories—in other words, when a learner simultaneously experiences some element of choice, wonder, and delight, the learning is likely playful.

For the playful learner, **choice** includes a sense of empowerment, autonomy, ownership, and intrinsic motivation. Learners may experience these feelings individually or as part of a group. Collectively making choices, and the accompanying sense of being part of something bigger than oneself, can enhance feelings of empowerment and ownership. To an observer, learners demonstrating choice are setting goals, influencing the direction of learning, negotiating with peers and adults, and making and changing rules. They are also likely to be choosing collaborators and roles, how long to work or play, and when to move around.

**Wonder** entails the experience of curiosity, novelty, surprise, and fascination, all which can engage learners. To an observer, a sense of wonder might look like improvising or exploring, creating or inventing, pretending or imagining, taking risks or learning from mistakes. It may look like focused attention, or students asking questions that further their learning. A sense of wonder can be experienced through play with materials, ideas, perspectives, music, symbols, words, languages, stories, movement, or other modes of expression.

Feelings of **delight** include excitement, satisfaction, inspiration, pride, belonging, enjoyment, and flow (a feeling of full immersion and energized focus). Delighted learners smile, laugh, joke, and are, at times, silly. They might sing and hum and feel a sense of *hygge*, a Danish term that reflects sharing a cozy time with good friends. Delight may also be observed as playful competition, celebration, excitement, engaging in an altruistic act, and working through challenges.

